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PLANNING THE 4-H GARDEN

A radio talk by Ida Crompton, Centerdale, R. I., delivered Saturday, April 2, 1932, in the National 4-H Club radio program, broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

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Hello, 4-H Club members, and our friends everywhere!

I feel a little backward about talking with 4-H garden club members about planning the 4-H garden, because all of you have better instructions from your leaders than I could give you. But I guess this radio talk is something like a report I might give at my club meeting so I'm hoping that you'll listen to it like you would to a report at the meeting of your club. Now here's my report.

This is my third year of 4-H garden club work. My garden is all planned, and I'm going to explain how and why I made the plans.

When I started to plan, I knew that my garden would have to produce fresh vegetables for our family and enough more to put up for the winter supply. Besides that, my garden must produce some vegetables for sale, fresh and canned. You see, the chief business of our farm is milk, and milk prices in Rhode Island this year have been very low.

Our family likes every kind of vegetable that grows, so selecting the vegetables to plant for the family use was mainly a job of choosing the ones that the 4-H health food score card suggests you eat for health.

The garden plans make space for carrots, beets, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, lettuce, turnips, and cabbage. My father and brother will raise our potatoes, corn, and some of the other vegetables. We will use about 150 quarts of canned tomatoes as this seems to be our favorite winter as well as summer vegetable. I'll have to set 75 plants to grow enough tomatoes. Next in favor come peas. We will grow enough to have fresh peas in the season and can about 50 quarts. I've already planted the early peas, and they'll be ready to pick in July. Each day we'll pick all that are fully ripened. Then when the peas have finished bearing, I plan to plant cabbage and turnips in the same space. We'll raise enough string beans for use fresh and to can 25 quarts. And about 25 quarts of carrots. We don't care much for beets canned, but do like them fresh with a New England boiled dinner. When sweet corn is ripe we have it at most every meal, but we don't can any large amount. I almost forgot to mention summer squash. We like this and raise enough to use it freely during the season.

Oh, yes. I have set aside one end of my garden for flowers -- sweet peas, nasturtiums, dahlias, and gladioli. These make the garden pretty, and my friends enjoy them when they come to visit. They always go home with a big bouquet.

To have enough space for all these vegetables and flowers, I need a garden 100 by 125 feet, and that is what I have laid out. The garden lies on a sunny side hill. The rows run lengthwise of the garden and around the hill. As I planned my garden early, I could order my seeds early. I got them from two different seedsmen who published germination tests of their seeds.

When it comes to handling the soil, the first thing I found out was that

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like most of the soil in Rhode Island ours was acid and needed lime. My experience has taught me something about fertilizers too. The first year I did not use enough. Last year I used the amounts recommended by our State College and found it paid. This year I'll follow the recommendations again.

I have found that frequent cultivation makes the work much easier and that the plants thrive best when cultivated often. This year I think it will take about two hours every day to keep the garden in good condition, but as I am to be at home this year, I will have the time to spend on it.

A new State road is to go through our land, and I am hoping to sell vegetables and poultry from a roadside stand. That will take more of my time. But I hope it will pay for part of my clothes for next winter.

Anyway I think the time is well spent. Every time I go into my garden there is something new to see. The plants have grown a little, maybe a bud or a flower has appeared. Later the vegetables form. The most satisfying moment is when I pick the ripened vegetables, cook them, and serve them to our family. Other vegetables never taste so good as the ones we raise ourselves. I don't think this is imagination either, because the vegetables are really fresh. Often they are on the stove and cooking within 10 minutes from the time they were growing on the vines or in the ground.

So there is my garden report to you 4-H club folks and friends all over the country. I know all of you in gardening clubs will enjoy the work just as much as I do. You and I will have plenty of exercise in caring for our gardens, and that will be good for us. Best of all, we will see things grow that would not grow at all if we didn't work to make them.
